

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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22 September 2023

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to express my concern about attempts to undermine and politicise the role of the Climate Change Committee following your speech on net zero this week.

As you know, the Committee is a statutory body composed of independent experts who advise Parliament and the Government on compliance with the Climate Change Act. The Committee performs a number of vital functions, including independent expert scrutiny of Government policies to achieve net zero annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, as required by the Act. The current members are recognised across the world as international experts drawn from business and academia.

In June, the Committee published its latest progress report, a comprehensive analysis of the UK's pathway towards fulfilment of the statutory Carbon Budgets, also required by the Act, and the 2050 target. The Government must respond to the progress report by the end of October 2023.

The progress report indicated that the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan published by the Government in March 2023 had fallen short of ensuring the UK's emissions will be within the Sixth Carbon Budget for 2033-37 and the 2030 target set out in the UK's nationally determined contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement. The report states: "The rate of emissions reduction will need to significantly increase for the UK to meet its 2030 NDC and the Sixth Carbon Budget". The report offered advice on a range of policy options for the Government to consider.

So it was somewhat disappointing to find that you had not consulted the Climate Change Committee, and had largely ignored the advice in its progress report, in preparing your speech. While some of the new policies and actions you announced, such as the rise in the grant available to households through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, should help to increase the rate of emissions reductions, the weakening of the targets for the phase-out of the installation of new boilers and the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, will likely reduce the rate.

During your speech you also called for future carbon budgets to be set only when they are accompanied by similar carbon budget delivery plans. This could be a sensible advance in UK policy-making. However, it was surprising then that you did not publish alongside your announcement an analysis quantifying the likely impact of the policy changes on future emissions. For the sake of clarity, I hope you will publish this analysis without delay.

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Chair:
**Professor Lord Stern
of Brentford**

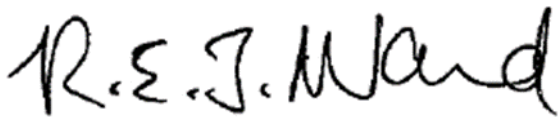
As you know, the Climate Change Committee is now carrying out its own analysis of the impacts of the policy changes you announced. If, as expected, it shows that the UK is likely to fail to meet the Sixth Carbon Budget and the nationally determined contribution to the Paris Agreement, the Government will be expected to set out a new Carbon Budget Delivery Plan showing how these targets will be achieved. I trust that the Government will not choose an alternative route, such as attempting to weaken the Sixth Carbon Budget and the target in the nationally determined contribution.

But my primary concern is a document that was circulated to journalists by Conservative Campaign Headquarters after your speech which attempted to politicise the advice of the Climate Change Committee. Although this document was described as "Questions to Labour on Net Zero", it included a section on "New measures which the CCC has said would need to be introduced..." It cited issues described as "road taxes", "flights taxes" and "diet change". You referred to some of these measures in your speech and indicated that you would not implement them.

While your Government is perfectly entitled not to accept advice from the Committee, it is extremely unhelpful to politicise its role and its advice in this way. I hope that you will find an opportunity to acknowledge this mistake and to re-affirm the importance of the Committee offering robust and rigorous independent advice on compliance with the Climate Change Act.

I hope you will also bear this in mind during the current process of appointing a new Chair of the Climate Change Committee. It is most important that whoever is appointed provides excellent leadership and ensures that the Committee continues to offer independent advice and avoids just rubberstamping Government policy regardless of whether it is consistent with the Climate Change Act.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.E.J. Ward". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bob Ward
Policy and Communications Director
Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment